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The Myerstown Academy.

PAPER READ BEFORE THE LEBANON COUNTY HISTORICAL

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By CAPT. J. H. BASSLER, MYERSTOWN, PA.

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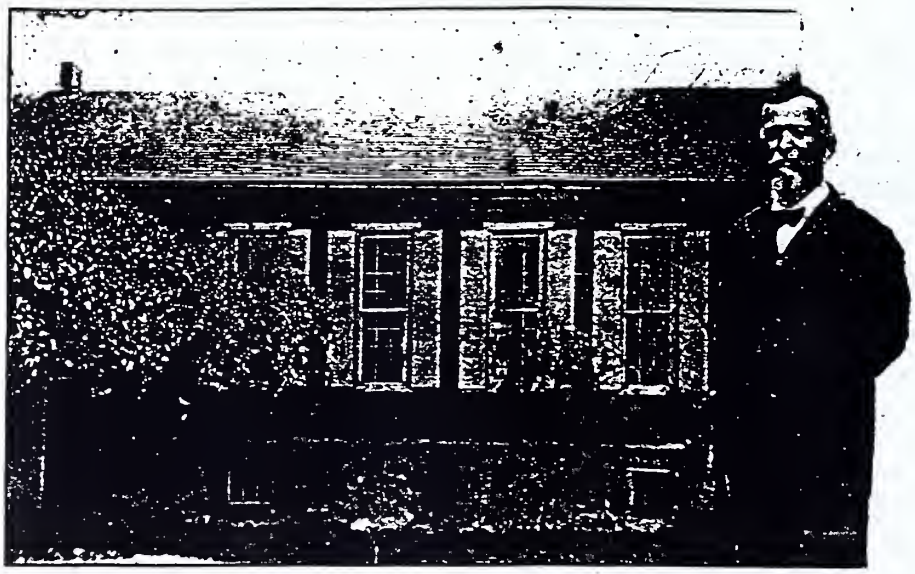

PRESENT APPEARANCE OF THE WEST SIDE OF THE MYERSTOWN ACADEMY AND THE AUTHOR AT THE AGE OF 72.

The Myerstown Academy.

PREFACE.

The task of writing the history of the Myerstown Academy was first assigned to Prof. C. A. Bowman, Ph. D., Dean of Albright College, and it is to be regretted that for want of material, the doctor felt obliged to shift the responsibility to less capable shoulders. But the same difficulty that confronted the doctor also beset his substitute—no records could be found.

Dr. Jeremiah Breitenbach, who was the first secretary of the corporation and of the Board of Trustees, served in that capacity for over twenty years. He was known to be a methodical and painstaking official, and the records he kept would, if found, have been of invaluable service in preparing this paper. Whether the book in which he kept the minutes was turned over to Geo. M. Seltzer, his successor, is not known.

John A. Donges, who succeeded Mr. Seltzer as secretary, says, he "only came in at the tail end"—to use his own expression—that he "kept no minutes," and that "Judge Joseph Coover, the then treasurer, had charge of all books and papers relating to the Academy." Mrs. Henrietta Coover, the widow of the Judge, on being applied to, found nothing but a package of receipts and a copy of the report of the Committee that audited the accounts of the former treasurer, John Bassler.

Dr. Breitenbach, who served so long and faithfully as secretary, moved, subsequently to his resignation, from Myerstown to Reading early in the sixties, and then to Jonestown, where he died in 1881; and a scrutiny of his personal

effects did not disclose the missing minutes. Dr. E. Grumbine, T. M. Gass and others kindly interested themselves in this unavailing search. The only paper found that gives any hint of the doings of the Board of Trustees, is an unsigned draft of an agreement between them and J. A. White, one of the earlier teachers, which was mailed to me last January by Dr Grumbine, with the explanation that: "Since Miss Kate Heilman's death, at Jonestown, the enclosed manuscript was unearthed among her brother in-law's effects—Dr. Breitenbach's." This paper, in the doctor's hand-writing, is specially interesting from the fact that it is the only scrap of secretary's records that has been found, and no doubt owes its preservation to the recipe of Dr. Stoy's cure for hydrophobia written on its back. The contents of this paper will be given further on.

The writer is indebted to Mrs. Kate Benson, of Lebanon, a daughter of John Kreitzer, one of the incorporators of the Academy, for the loan of a catalogue published in 1845. This, as far as known, is the only copy of any catalogue of the Myerstown Academy now extant. From an historical standpoint it is a veritable treasure, for the preservation of which I cannot be too thankful to Mrs. Benson.

I am also under obligations to Mrs. Benson's brother, Mr. Andrew Kreitzer, for getting said catalogue for me, and for verifying names in my list of teachers; and also for the same, to A. W. Mosser, (since deceased); and to Mrs. Judge Joseph Coover, who also gave me other valuable information; and while all the founders of the Academy have long ago passed to their final reward, this aged and remarkably preserved lady, sister of one of them—Levi Spangler—still lingers upon the stage of life, with mind unimpaired.

Since I had to rely so largely on my memory for historical data, unavoidable errors may have crept into this paper, for which this explanation must be a sufficient excuse.

PRIOR SCHOOLS.

Myerstown Academy having been founded over a decade of years before the adoption of the public school system in Jackson township, we cannot form a true estimate of its beneficial influence without taking a retrospective view of the schools then existing in the community. These were, one at the east end called, with reference to the octagonal stone structure in which it was held, the "eight-cornered school;" another at the west end, a very plain, frame weather-boarded building, known as the "Couch school," named after the Scotch-Irish teacher, who presided over it; and a third in the west central part of town, in which the German language was taught exclusively by that gruff, foreign Teuton, John Lipp. This school was kept in a building erected for the double purpose of a school and a dwelling for the teacher and his family. It was the only one of the three that had benches provided with backs.

These schools were all equally bare of suitable furniture —no maps, no globes, no blackboards and no desks except one for the teacher, and an apology for desks, for the use of the more advanced pupils, consisting of boards fixed on a slanting support nailed against the sides of the school room. The play grounds were practically limited to the public highway.

Mr. Couch, under whom the writer learned his A, B, C's, was a lame gentleman able to walk only with the aid of a crutch. He was a clever teacher and moderate in the use of the lash, except on Monday, while recovering from the after-effects of his habitual Saturday—Sunday sprees, when a slight offense would usually bring dire punishment upon the offender.

The advent of the Academy, with the addition of a Junior department for beginners, at once stranded the Couch school, while Mr. Lipp's school had a feeble existance for several years longer, when it, too, was permanently closed.

It is well to note the divergent after-lives of these retired

veterans of the birch. Mr. Coueh reformed: and ten years later settled in a rural home of his own, on the banks of the Swatara, near Freystown, where he ended his days in peace and quiet, respected and ministered to by his neighbors

Mr. Lipp took a downward course, became a tramp, and suffered a tragic death; for, while lodging in a barn one night near Rehrersburg, the building took fire, probably through his careless use of matches, and poor Lipp's life went out in the flames of a mighty funeral pyre.

The east-end school did not seem to *lose* any patronage through the opening of the Academy. There were a sufficient number of unprogressives in the community who regarded, as extravagant, the spacious and commodious school rooms of the new Institution, their superior equipment, and the large play ground surrounding the building. Possibly, they deemed it good discipline for yougsters to sit on backless benches during school hours, for it was sure to teach them the Spartan virtues of fortitude and endurance. Possibly, too, the popularity of the teacher, Mr. Meily, served to hold the patrons of the school. Old residents may still remember in what demand this genial and humorous young man was at apple butter boiling socials, then common in the neighborhood.

This school of Mr. Meily's being very close to the Academy grounds, some of his flock delighted to show their contempt for us "stuck-up" Academy boys of the lower department, by calling us "Keller Asel," because the floor of our school room was lower than the surface of the surrounding yard, which reached nearly to the window-sills; and, by way of retaliation, we often called them "Oeht Eckicha Krout-Kep." We had to be cautious, however, not to use this epithet in the vernacular while on the Academy grounds, for the penalty was three cents—one cent a word.

THE FOUNDERS.

The men to whom we are indebted for the establishment of the Myerstown Academy, which was such an important

step in educational progress in our midst, and for which we cherish their memory, were :

Henry Bassler, John Bassler, Thomas Bassler, John Breitenbach, Dr. Jeremiah Breitenbach, Peter S. Clarke, John Immel, John Kreitzer, Rev. Thomas H. Leinbach, Lyon Lemberger, Jonathan Miller, Samuel Morret, John Mosser, Daniel Meyers, John Meyers, George Pfleger, Esq., Daniel Seibert, Isaac Shaeff, Levi Spangler, Jacob Stewart and Daniel Stine, Esq.

The three Basslers' above were brothers; so were the two Meyers' while the two Breitenbachs were father and son. The names being placed in alphabetical order, brings Henry Bassler, a farmer of the neighborhood, first on the list; while Daniel Stine, a merchant of town, a justice of the peace, a surveyor and conveyancer, and later a member of the State Legislature, both as Representative and Senator, and an iron-master, comes last.

These pioneers in the cause of a higher education in their community deserve better than a mere mention of their names. They showed their progressive spirit, not only by providing for an advanced course of education, but also by looking to the comfort and welfare of primary pupils, in erecting a building with a juvenile department, furnished with lidded desks and with comfortable chairs to sit on. This can only be fully appreciated by those who remember the scant and primitive furniture of the prior schools and the discomforts experienced while attending them. Therefore, holding these founders in grateful remembrance, we cannot do less than to give each at least a line or two of reminiscence.

Contrary to the usually accepted opinion, that farmers are prone to move slowly in educational matters, it is a notable fact that over one-third of these public-spirited men were exclusively engaged in agriculture. And another curious fact is, that all their descendants in the male line drifted into other occupations, and, with a few exceptions, into other localities.

Of this rural portion of the Academy's founders, the furthest from town was Mr. Stewart, residing about three miles northeast, and known for his progressive spirit and tidiness about the farm.

Mr. Kreitzer, that sturdy old yeoman, had his home about one mile east of town, on high ground along the B. & D. turnpike, where the sweeping winds gave vigor to his progeny, three of whom served in the writer's company during our Civil War; while another—a graduate of Pennsylvania College, and teacher in Texas at the breaking-out of the rebellion, was pressed into the rebel service and died in the Confederate army. According to Rev. Dr. Schantz, one of Mr. Kreitzer's earliest and most cherished memories was seeing Washington, the Father of his country, water his horse in a creek, east of Myerstown. Was that the unrecorded hunting trip for recreation of the National Executive, when, as tradition has it, he and some noted Penna. Germans, who had served under him in the Revolutionary War, spent a night at the Ley mansion, now Samuel Uhrich's, west of town? Or was it during the movement of the National forces, under Washington, to suppress the whiskey rebellion?

Not far north of the Kreitzer home resided another of the founders, Mr. Shaeff, who was such a lover of music, that, in addition to the cares of his farm, he at one time organized a brass band of which he was the leader. Prof. Wm. Sharp, musical instructor, and composer of considerable note, is one of his sons.

John and Daniel Myers were grandsons of Isaac Myers, who, three-quarters of a century earlier, laid out Tulpehocken town, later named Myerstown, in honor of the founder. The rich farms of the Myers' bounded the town on the south. These brothers had caught the spirit of the religious upheavel of that time, and considering the older denominations too conservative, they joined in the new movement and became pillars of the U. B. church.

Mr. Seibert was a stout gentleman and is remembered as following his haymakers and harvesters riding on a sulkey.

Mr. Mosser, the southern boundary of whose broad acres was located only several hundred yards north of the Academy, was a quiet and unpretentious gentlemen, who confined himself closely to his calling and made a decided success of it.

Henry Bassler resided a mile and a half northwest of the Academy in a sunny nook at the head of Meadow-vale, and it was here, that, surrounded by a rich variety of fruit in season, the soothing hum of bees, and a lovely and far-spreading landscape, that the writer spent his happy boyhood days.

There was another third of the founders who were also actively engaged in farming while also following other business pursuits. Thus, Thomas Bassler, residing in the old Bassler homestead along the Union canal, near town, besides his extensive farming operations, dealt in grain, lumber and coal; as did also Levi Spangler, on the Spangler farm, about a mile further west along the canal, but who subsequently became a coal operator in Schuylkill county; Jonathan Miller, in addition to farming, operated a gypsum mill on Tulpehocken creek, south of town, ground gypsum being at that time extensively used by farmers as a fertilizer, by sowing it btoad cast on clover fields, and dusting it on and around young growing corn; John Breitenbach conducted a tannery, along with his farm, east of town, he being one of the old class tanners, who made leather worthy of the name, at a time when a pair of boots or shoes had to last us boys for a whole year; John Bassler, treasurer of the corporation for fifteen years before moving to Philadelphia, was proprietor of the U. S. hotel, while also owning and managing a slice of the ancestral Bassler estate, having earlier dealt extensively in grain, coal and lumber, and later served two sessions in the State Legislature; Peter S. Clarke was a New Englander, who, in his wanderings, drifted to our goodly land, was captivated by one of the fair daughters of Pennsylvania Germandom, and, marrying her, settled down in a pleasant home along the pike, east of town, near that of his brother in law, John Kreitzer. Peter, being shrewd, made his head save his hands, by dealing extensively in cattle, while entrusting the work of his farm to

other capable hands; and, having no children, he adopted and educated his nephew, the late Doctor M. C. Kreitzer, of Philadelphia.

Of the one third strictly non-rural incorporators, the Hon. Daniel Stine, with his varied employments and enterprises, has already been mentioned: George Pfleger was a merchant and a justice of the peace, and later moved to the City of Brotherly Love; John Immel, grandson of Captain Leonard Immel, of the War for Independence, was a grain, lumber and coal dealer, with warehouse located where South College street now crosses the abandoned Union canal; Lyon Lemberger, a thrifty Jew, whose son is an honored member of the Reformed church, was in the mercantile business; Samuel Morret, president of the corporation, was repair superintendent of a section of the Union canal; Jeremiah Breitenbach, M. D., was the corporation's secretary, and one of the town's leading medical practioners; and Rev Thomas H. Leinbach was the resident minister of the Tulpehocken Reformed church, two miles east of town, and gave three sons to the Gospel ministry.

THE CHARTER.

The Act of the Legislature, granting a charter to the Myerstown Academy, opens as follows:

AN ACT

TO INCORPORATE THE MYERSTOWN ACADEMY.

"Section 1. Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in General Assembly met, and it is hereby enacted by the authority of the same, That the Association formed at Myerstown, in the county of Lebanon; under the articles hereinafter set forth, by the name and style of the Myerstown Academy, shall be and hereby is enacted into a body corporate, by the same name and style, and under the same articles; and by said name and style shall have perpetual succession, and be capable in law and equity, to sue and be sued, and to take

and hold the stock heretofore subscribed, or which may hereafter be subscribed, and all property, real and personal, which may be granted, and in anywise transferred to the said Academy, for the purposes of education, and the same to alien and dispose of, or to hold and use for the purpose aforesaid: and may have a common seal, and the same alter, break or renew at pleasure. Provided, that said Academy shall not be entitled to the annual appropriations to Academies provided for in the fourth Section of the Act of the twelfth of April, eighteen hundred and thirty-eight, entitled 'A supplement to an Act to consolidate and amend the several Acts relative to a general system of education by common schools, passed the thirteenth day of June, one thousand eight hundred and thirty-six' And the following articles of Association, shall regulate said corporation; the Legislature reserving the right to alter or modify the same at pleasure."

Why the Academy's charter debarred it from the annual appropriations provided by law, it is difficult to explain.

It could easily have been so framed as to entitle it to such appropriations, but it seems its founders preferred "to paddle their own canoe" in preference to asking State aid, or running their Institution with other people's money.

Passing by such of the following eighteen articles as are more or less common to all charters of the same nature, it will answer the purpose of this paper to select those that are more or less unusual. Thus, Article tenth says. "A superintendent shall be selected from among the Trustees, whose duty it shall be to examine into the progress of the scholars, and enjoin more distinctly the necessary regulation of the Institution, by which the teacher is to be governed."

The above Article in the charter must have been early abandoned as impracticable. The writer never knew of the provision until lately he procured a copy of the charter from Harrisburg.

Article fifteenth says: "A majority of the Trustees may loan or let the building for the accommodation of Sunday schools. * * * " This is another evidence of the liberal-

mindedness of the Academy's founders. At a time when churches were still controlled by the anti-Sunday school conservatives, they recognized the importance of religious instruction for the young on the Sabbath, and encouraged the use of their building for this purpose. The Sunday school idea thus happily nurtured in the charter, bore rich fruit. It gave the community, not only a prosperous Union Sabbath school, but also its first free library, containing a goodly number of standard works of literature, from which the young of that day derived much entertainment and substantial benefit. This successful free religious school shed its beneficent influence over the community for more than fifteen years, by which time the different churches had caught up with the idea, and each denomination established its own Sunday school.

The charter closes with Section 2, of Article eighteenth, as follows: "This act shall not take effect till the Board of Trustees of the said Association shall signify to the Governor in writing their acceptance thereof."

WM. HOPKINS,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.
CHARLES B. PENROSE,
Speaker of the Senate.

Approved—The seventeenth of June, eighteen hundred and thirty-nine.

DAVID R. PORTER.

BUILDING AND PLAY-GROUND.

The Academy building, a brick structure, 33x66 feet, was beautifully located, at the east end of town, on a gentle slope on the north side of Main street—the Berks and Dauphin turnpike, at that time the principal highway of travel between Reading and Harrisburg.

The Academy grounds, 220x400 feet, (including the residence lot) had a front yard of ample depth and width planted with shade trees, and a back yard spacious enough

for all kinds of ball and other games. In providing a playground of such liberal proportions, the founders of the Academy recognized the importance of athletic sports to stimulate physical development, and the need of such development to ensure robust health and vigor of mind. In this respect the Academy was highly favored, and was far ahead of our more costly high schools of the present day. In truth the public school grounds are usually more conspicuous for their stinted dimensions than otherwise. The Academy-taught men and women, now rapidly passing away, will remember with what zest they joined in the games of shlawk-bolla, shtub-bolla and others for the boys, and hickle-hous, tag and a variety more for the girls, then customary during the noon hour and the fifteen minutes forenoon and afternoon recesses, if weather permitted, and how refreshed they felt on again resuming their studies.

The Academy building was amply large, and the Senior department was high in ceiling. The frontispiece is only a part of a side view of the original building, with the windows of the lower department mostly walled up. Since it has been converted into a shirt and waist manufactory, the large addition built to its front obliterated its original beauty of proportion, and destroyed the handsome uncovered veranda stretching across the second story front and around to the side entry-doors, with the staircases from thence to the ground.

The large main hall for the Senior Department on the second floor, had a platform across the north end, containing, besides the teacher's desk, a library to the rear of one end, and a glass case of philosophical instruments to the rear of the other end.

The desks were double and provided with lids. There was comfortable desk room for sixty students, and, in case of need, the recitation room to the rear would accommodate a number more; and even the entry hall was sometimes utilized for seating room.

The large recitation room to the rear of the main hall

contained a good sized cabinet with a well selected mineralogical collection. The partition between the two rooms was in sections, which were removed when public "exhibitions," consisting of speeches, dialogues, farces and theatricals, were given. A drop curtain on a roller extended the length of the movable partition, while side and rear curtains were in readiness to be put up and used on such occasions.

In the lower department the desks were usually crowded together to accommodate a large number of pupils.

The building was surmounted with a cupola, containing a bell which rang out its summons to study when play time was over. This bell is now doing service in the cupola of the North College street grammar school.

The corporation also owned a dwelling for the principal and his family, on a lot adjoining the school grounds on the east side.

TEACHERS OF THE JUNIOR DEPARTMENT.

The head teachers of the Junior department were:
Wm. G. Renner, April, 1840, to April, 1842.
Mr. Quimby, April, 1842, to April, 1843.
Wm. G. Renner, April, 1843, to December, 1844.
G. W. Andrews, January, 1845, to April, 1846.
Lyman Nutting, April, 1846, to April, 1847.
Wm. Bierbrower, April, 1847, to April, 1850.
Joseph Uhler, April, 1850, to the time of the introduction of the common school system into Jackson township, when he was appointed teacher of a public school in town. The names of the assistant teachers cannot be recalled.

The writer knows nothing from experience, regarding the teachers of the lower department, except the first two, —*Renner and Quimby*,— and not much of them that is to their credit. They were both typical representatives of the old-time school masters, firmly convinced that a school could not be properly governed without the use of the rod, and that the comprehension of dull pupils could be sharpened by an occasional thrashing. They had their scape-goats and their

favorites: the birch for the former and moral suasion for the latter.

The writer received such liberal doses of birch that he must either have been a dull pupil, an incorrigible mischief maker, or a scape-goat. He remembers one solitary, green oasis, amidst the dreary desert of this portion of his school life, which convinces him there was no real lack of ambition on his part, however dormant it may have been. This pleasant remembrance was the winning of a prize, (a picture of Napoleon crossing the Alps), for being the first in his class to commit to memory the multiplication table. This was accomplished during the evening of the day on which the prize was offered and it was a surprise to him to find how easily a task is completed when the will is aroused. All *that will* needed was a proper stimulus which kind words could have furnished as readily as a prize.

A prolific source of trouble was our absurd English spelling, much of which does violence to reason and common sense. It is no exaggeration to say that a strictly phonetic spelling of our language would save a child two years or more of worse than useless study; and under the above dominies would have saved also the corporal punishment occasionally inflicted for failure, and which did injury beyond conception by engendering a bitter dislike for school. It would also save adults much waste of time in conning dictionaries to refresh the memory in orthography. There being no silent letters in phonetic spelling, and every elementary sound having its own individual letter, named by that sound, whether aspirate or vocal, it is plain that the spelling of words and their pronunciation is one and the same thing. There would be a great saving of time, even, by first teaching the child to read the phonetic print, and then to make the transition to common print. This was tested by the writer 37 years ago on a boy who was kept from school because his sight was too defective to distinguish one letter from another without the use of special glasses of very unusual magnifying power.

This educational experiment was so remarkably success-

ful that it deserves to be put on record. And where more appropriate than in this paper? For it was an outgrowth of the author's experience in teaching the elementary sounds, while principal of the Myerstown Academy.

Some idea of the boy's defective vision may be formed from the fact that he was in the habit of gazing at the sun with his naked eyes, and when asked its size, compared it to a quarter dollar as felt by his hand.

It was planned not to put this lad to study until he was nine years old; and then take a short cut by teaching him Ben. Pitman's system of phonetic print. But being a great lover of Sunday school, and feeling, after reaching the age of eight, that it was a disgrace to remain any longer in the infant department, he insisted on being taught to read. So, after procuring the proper books from Cincinnati, O., he was taught the alphabet of 42 letters the first week, and at the close of the second week he could readily read the Proverbs of Solomon, and his ambition was gratified the next day, Sunday, by being promoted into a class of his playmates.

The boy felt very proud of his achievement, and, best of all, having tasted the sweets of victory, he was eager for fresh conquests. He made the transition to common print without difficulty by comparing his phonetically printed New Testament with an ordinary one, the wide departure from natural spelling, in which, excited his curiosity and greatly surprised him, and evidently aided him in memorizing spelling.

He soon tackled arithmetic, and without assistance except an occasional suggestion from his mother, he, in good time, mastered every rule; and his success gave him such unbounded self confidence that he took up one study after another, and, unaided, became proficient in all the common branches of education.

To him schools were unnecessary; all he needed was text books. The only week day school he ever attended was a writing school to acquire skill with the pen to aid him in telegraphy which requires rapid penmanship.

At eleven years of age he took charge of a telegraph office established in his home in a town of the coal region. At the age of eighteen he fell a victim to lung troubles, and his grave is in the beautiful Mountain View Cemetery of Oakland, California.

The many triumphs of his short life were mainly due to being saved the stultifying experience of having first to learn our ordinary spelling with its incongruities, instead of phonetic spelling, which being natural, does not tax the memory, and is acquired in a week instead of years.

If it should be asked, what has this to do with the history of the Myerstown Academy, we answer: It emphasizes the wrong perpetrated by the above pedagogues in using the oral method, the very worst in teaching our peculiar spelling, and cruelly punishing children when slow in mastering its puzzling inconsistencies. And, further, it is strictly in line with the object of this paper, since he, who was instrumental in changing a serious affliction into a comparative blessing, and incidentally demonstrating the incalculable advantages of purely phonetic spelling, was previously a student and then principal of the Academy.

If Andrew Carnegie's offer to defray the expenses of an international spelling reform commission should result in nothing more than to eliminate the worst of the crudities of our present spelling, it would outweigh all his other benefactions.

When the half breed Cherokee Indian, Tahlequah, conceived the idea, many years ago, of constructing a written language for his people, and deviced an original phonetic alphabet, he was centuries in advance of the men who first put our language into print by a hab hazzard spelling with the borrowed and inadequate Roman alphabet. Had there been a Tahlequah at that time to clothe our beautiful and comprehensive English language in a natural garb, it would have given it a supremacy that would ultimately ensure its universal adoption.

Mr. Renner did a commendable thing in promptly putting a stop to the use of the Pennsylvania German language on the school grounds by exacting a penny fine for each word used; and as pennies at that time were a luxury, it was only, when, occasionally forgetting ourselves in the enthusiasm of play, that we violated the rule. Such mistakes always called forth the jeers and laughter of playmates. At first the old-fashioned coppers would accumulate on the teacher's desk into a handsome pile by the end of the week; and those pupils who were fond of patronizing old "Granny" Schoener, by investing in her delicious penny "moshies"—small patty pan-shaped taffy, filled with walnut kernels—would envy the teacher this convenient source of revenue. This rule, strictly enforced, was a powerful stimulus to the acquisition of the English language. But for a long time our mother tongue would assert itself as soon as we got outside the school-yard gate.

One pleasant remembrance of the schools of Renner and Quimby is the singing before dismissal in the evening. The pupils would rise, and, standing behind their chairs, would sing with a gusto and power that made the welkin ring. "Busy Bee," "Oh How Brightly, How Brightly, the Sun Moves Along," and "Haste Thee Winter, Haste Away," songs we have not heard for over half a century, were among the favorites; and "Lord Dismiss Us with Thy Blessing," was a hymn of which we never tired.

Passing from the harsh rule of the lower school under Renner, to the gentle and quiet control of the upper school under Chapman, was, to one of the former teacher's scape-goats, a happy occasion never to be forgotten.

THE PRINCIPALS OF THE SENIOR DEPARTMENT.

These were:

William Reynolds, part of the year 1840.
Columbus Wetherew, the balance of 1840.
Richard S. Evans, April, 1841, to April, 1842.
J. A. White, April, 1842, died January 20th, 1843.

Rev. McDonald, January 25th, 1843, to March 25th, 1843.

Rev. Jacob C. Chapman, A. M., April, 1843, to April, 1846.

J. G Merchant, April, 1846, to April, 1847.

A. M. Middlemess, April, 1847, to April, 1850.

Henry C. Cline, April, 1850, to July 25th, 1851.

Peter B. Witmer, A. M., July 25th, 1851, to April, 1857.

Sylvanus Shimer, Esq., April, 1857, to July, 1859.

J. H. Bassler and John Myers, July, 1859, to April, 1862.

J. H. Bassler, April, 1862, to August 8th, 1862.

Rev. Samuel Francis, September, 1862, to April, 1863.

John Myers, April, 1863, to April, 1865.

Calvin Gerhard, April, 1865, to April, 1866.

Samuel P. Hemperly, April, 1866, to April, 1867.

The list of the assistant teachers cannot be given as the names have nearly all faded from memory.

The short stay of the early principals of the Academy indicates that the Trustees were not fortunate in their choice, and it must have seriously impaired the success of the school.

Passing over the brief terms of Reynolds and Wetherew, of whom nothing is remembered, we come to Richard S. Evans, who was noted for his hot temper and the severity of his discipline. As an exercise for his boys during recess, he taught them the art of fencing. It was quite a novelty—the two opposing lines of contestants, warding off and making thrusts with their wooden rapiers. But the innovation was considered by the community of questionable utility, and met with small approval. The irascible temper of Mr. Evans led him to commit an assault upon a quiet, inoffensive, eight-year old farm lad attending the *lower* school. His anger had been kindled that summer-noon hour by the noise proceeding from a crowd of boys on the lower floor. He started down in hot haste to enforce his authority. The culprits, however, noticed him descending the staircase from the veranda, and made their escape by jumping out of the open windows on the other side of the room. Mr. Reynolds, finding no one

but young Adam Haak, who was trying to pass him in the door-way, seized him by the coat collar and gave him a terrible beating with a cane. Adam was entirely innocent. He had arrived just the minute before, and, after depositing some trifle in his desk, was on his way out to the play ground.

This outraged lad was a member of one of the most prominent families in the community, and his father, Henry Haak, very properly brought an action for assault and battery. Mr. Evans plead not guilty, and getting permission to be his own counsel, he managed so adroitly that the jury brought in a verdict of not guilty, and the prosecutor had to pay the court expenses, amounting to over $37. This was considered by the community a gross miscarriage of justice, and so many withdrew their patronage from Mr. Evans, that his school was no longer renumerative, and he left at the end of the year.

A relentless fate seemed to follow the boy who had excited so much sympathy, for, not many years after, while a passenger on his uncle's boat on a trip to Philadelphia, a ferry cable swept him into a dam of the Schuylkill river and he was drowned.

The next principal was J. A. White, under whom the school speedily prospered. He married Miss Mary Bower, a daughter in one of the leading families of town, and everything betokened a long and prosperous career in his chosen field of labor. But, in less than nine months, the reaper Death cut him down, and the Academy was bereft of a teacher of great promise.

The original draft of the contract between the Board of Trustees and Mr. White (referred to in the preface as the only scrap of secretary's records that has been found) deserves to be embodied in this paper for the light it throws on the subject of salaries, the range of studies, and the evidence it bears of the solicitude of the Trustees for *moral* as well as intellectual training. It reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned Trustees of the Myerstown Acade-

my, do hereby promise and agree to pay unto J. A. White, Esq., the sum of $400 per annum for superintending the upper department of the Academy, provided the number of scholars does not exceed twenty five; $500 if the number exceeds twenty-five and not above thirty-five, and at the rate of $600 per annum if the number exceeds thirty-five, with the rent of the dwelling included: Provided, however, that he (the principal) will be satisfied with the place, or Board of Trustees and the Board with him, then the above contract to be continued one year; otherwise it is annulled at the end of the first quarter; Provided, also, that there be inculcated habits tending to success and happiness in life by enacting a rigid moral discipline, taking the Bible as the guide, with the development of the mental faculties in accordance with the By-Laws and Regulations of the Institution: and which is to be effected by frequent lectures, full illustrations and the practical application of all the exercises.

"The plan of studies to be taught is embraced in a full course usually persued at the colleges, such as the English, Latin, Greek and French languages; a whole course of Mathematics; moral, mental and Natural Philosophy; Sacred and Profane as well as Ancient and Modern History and Geography; Elocution, Mineralogy, Drawing, Book-keeping, and those minor branches belonging to a complete English education. One month notice to be given should there be dissatisfaction that another principal would be required."

For a principal, qualified to teach all of the above branches, Mr. White's salary looks small compared with present day salaries. But it must be remembered, *that* was a time of money scarcity, when men would work through haying and harvest, twelve hours a day, for three "levies" (37½ cents), and the earnings of professional men were correspondingly small.

The formidable list of studies enumerated did not constitute a fixed course. Students could, in a great measure, make their own selection of studies. What was aimed at by the Board of Trustees, was a broad and liberal culture for those

who had the time to pursue all the studies, and special courses for others whose time and opportunities were limited. This flexibility had some decided advantages over a fixed curriculum of studies, requiring all students to pass through the same rigid course, without regard to their tastes or adaptabilities.

After an interim of over a month following the death of Mr. White, Rev. McDonald took charge of the school, and at the end of two months was succeeded by Rev. Jacob C. Chapman, A. M., of Exeter, New Hampshire.

Yours Truly
Jacob Chapman

The new principal, a graduate of the celebrated Phillips Academy of his native town, and also a graduate, with honors, of Dartmouth College, and of Andover Theological Seminary, was a gentleman in the full sense of the term, a ripe scholar and a peerless teacher. He taught school for the love of it and for the good it enabled him to do. He used his exquisite tact, not only in training the intellect, but also in building up moral character. Instances in point crowd upon the memory. Space forbids mention of more than the one following:

A pupil had chosen haymaking as his subject for the weekly composition, and mentioned that his own duties connected therewith included carrying water and the whiskey-bottle. After having read it before the school, as was the custom, Mr. Chapman passed a few kindly and appreciative criticisms, questioned the author closely about the whiskey-bottle, and then dwelled with such feeling upon the evils lurking therein, that his young student never after forgot it. The whiskey bottle upon the hay and harvest fields is a thing of the past; but he can never look upon the sad picture of a bloated face or a staggering inebriate without thinking of his beloved teacher's tactful warning to him and the rest of the school in the long ago.

Mr. Chapman was the first to start Sunday school work in Myerstown. This was in 1843 and prospered from the very start. He was also ready and willing to preach on the Sabbath, whenever and wherever he was called. This was but seldom, owing to the small number of English speaking people at that time in this and neighboring communities. His sermons in Myerstown were doubtless the first English preaching given there.

The following Catalogue, the only one of the Academy now known to exist, was published in 1845, the second year of Mr. Chapman's principalship:

Catalogue
of the
Officers and Students
of
Myerstown Academy
For the year ending March, 1845

Lebanon, Pa.

Brower & Worth, Printers.
1845

CORPORATION

PRESIDENT

Samuel Morret

SECRETARY

J. Breitenbach, M. D.

TREASURER

John Bassler

Rev. T. H. Leinbach	Lyon Lemberger
Daniel Stine, Esq.	John Breitenbach
George Pfleger, Esq.	Jonathan Miller
John Myers	Thomas Bassler
Daniel Myers	Isaac Scharff
Levi Spangler	Daniel Seibert
John Mosser	Peter S. Clarke
John Kreitzer	Henry Bassler
Jacob Stewart	John Immel

INSTRUCTORS

SENIOR DEPARTMENT

Jacob Chapman, A. M., Principal
Wm. P. Morret, Asst. Principal

JUNIOR DEPARTMENT

Wm. G. Renner	Mrs. Mary Renner
Miss O. C. Howe	Miss M. A. Renner

STUDENTS OF THE SENIOR DEPARTMENT.

Names	Residence
Charles M. Albright,	Shertlesville
Henry Albright,	"
John Edward Bright,	Myerstown
John S. Bassler,	"
J. H. Bassler,	"
Jonathan Bassler,	"
J. H. C. Bahney,	Lebanon
Josiah Berntheisel,	"
J. B. Brandt,	Myerstown
John A. Donges,	"
J. H. Elliodein,	Lebanon
G. M. Fisher,	Myerstown
J. G. Fuss,	"
A. B. Gorgas,	Pinegrove
William A. Halter,	Washington, D. C.
Jerome A. Kintzel,	Myerstown
Henry Kreitzer,	"
M. C. Kreitzer,	"
Andrew Kreitzer,	"
Jonathan Kreitzer,	"
John Kreitzer,	"
William S. Ley,	Pinegrove
Isaac Loose	Myerstown
Thomas Loose,	"
Wm. P. Morret,	"
Saml. D. Morret,	"
Jonathan Miller,	"
Daniel Myers,	"
John Myers,	"
Jerome Myers,	"
A. W. Mosser,	"

Henry Mosser,	"
Henry Palm,	Sinking Spring
James Pfleger,	Myerstown
S. M. Pfleger,	"
Daniel Riensel,	Shertlesville
I. B. Sheets,	East Hanover
Joseph Uhler,	Palmyra
S. B. Wenrich,	Myerstown
Alinda S. Breitenbach,	"
Sarah Donges,	"
Isabella Lindenmuth,	"
Lydia Pfleger,	"
Rebecca Ramler,	"
Caroline Runkle,	Bernville
Lavinia E. Spangler,	Myerstown
Malinda E. Stine,	"
Eliza Van Reed,	Sinking Spring
Amanda Woolison,	Myerstown

"In this department, instruction is given in the Latin, Greek and French languages, and in all the higher branches of an English education, including weekly Compositions and Declamations, together with frequent exercises in Elocution.

"The following are the Text Books, now in use: The Bible; Worcester's Comprehensive Dictionary; Porter's Rhetorical Reader; Emerson's First Class Reader; Smith's English Grammar; Frost's Exercises in Composition; Parley's Histories; Morse's New School Geography.

"In the languages: Latin Grammar, by Andrews & Stoddard; Latin Lessons, Latin Reader, Latin Exercises, by Andrews; Caesar's Commentaries; Gould's Ovid; Cicero's Orations; Sallust; Gould's or Cooper's Virgil; Greek Lessons, and Greek Grammar, by Goodrich; Greek Reader; Testament.

"In French: Levizac's Grammar; Bolmar's Edition of Fables; Collot's Pronouncing Reader; Le Bran's Telemaque; Histoire des Etats Unis."

"The Academical year is divided into four terms, of twelve weeks each, commencing the first part of April, July, October, and January.

"At the close of each term there is a public examination of the students in all the branches they have studied."

JUNIOR DEPARTMENT

Names	Names
Anthony Achey	Wm. Lutz
William Arrance	Adam Loose
Abraham Burkner	Isaac S. Myers
John Bennethum	Franklin Myers
Franklin Bower	John Martin
Jeremiah Bender	Isaac Miller
Zelotes Bassler	Henry Mosser
Levi Batdorf	Charles Mengel
Jeremiah Blecher	Henry Myers
Jonathan Bright	David Schell
Edward Bright	Henry Schell
Edward Ditzler	Wm. Shirk
Zephyr Fuss.	James Seibert
Jerome Haak	Levi Seibert
Adam Haak	John Scharff
John Hertzler	Samuel Stouch
Levi Hertzler	John Seibert
John Helms	Simon Wenrich
Amos Krammas	William Wenrich
Aaron Kreitzer	George Woolison
Peter Kutz	Franklin Woolison
Charles Kitzmiller	Cyrus Wolf
Jonathan Kreitzer	Isaac Wolf
John Leevy	Mary A. Arrance
Henry Lengel	Sarah Batdorf
Thomas Leinbach	Susanna Burkholder
Isaac Lebengood	Mary A. Brehm
Gabriel Lebengood	Mary Bassler
Mary Cook	Sarah Loose

Caroline Cook
Mary Dinges
Diana Dinges
Amelia Donges
Angelina Ditzler
Elizabeth Fasnacht
Margaret Fortney
Matilda Groff
Sarah Haak
Lydia Hertzler
Amelia Hertzler
Mary A. Immel
Eliza Kreitzer
Catherine Kitzmiller
Harriet Kintzel
Sarah Leinbach
Emma Leinbach
Matilda Lindemuth
Lavinia Levengood
Sarah Morret
Emma Morret
Lucetta Miller
Mary Price
Mary Pheon
Rebecca Ramler
Emma Philips
Melinda Stine
Mary Shoener
Catherine A. Stouch
Amanda Schwartz
Emma Sheetz
Precilla Segner
Lydia Seebolt
Mary Wolf
Susan M. Wolf

Senior Department,	49
Junior Department,	92
Total,	141

"The studies pursued in this Department are those usually taught in common schools. The Trustees need offer no more proof of its value, than the fact of its increasing prosperity. Its character has been rising of late, and they are determined that it shall continue to rise. Mr. Renner being about to leave, to engage in other business more congenial to his health, the Trustees have been so fortunate as to engage the services of G. W. Andrews, Esq., now preceptor of the Academy at Annville, a man whose talents and experience admirably qualify him,

"to rear the tender thought,
And teach the young idea how to shoot."

"As the number of pupils must be limited, parents who wish to secure seats for their children, will do well to enter their names, for the next term, in season."

"The object of this Institution is to furnish pupils with a thorough knowledge of the studies they may persue, together with such intellectual and moral discipline as will render their knowledge practical and useful. To accomplish this object, the moral faculties must be called forth and cultivated in proportion as the intellectual powers are developed. Since there can be no correct morality where the doctrines of religion are unknown, the Bible is the most important Text Book, in an institution of learning. Every student should possess a copy of the Sacred Scriptures, which are read morning and evening, both for their literary and their religious influence.

"An early and familiar acquaintance with the Word of God, will enlarge the mind, and strengthen the judgment. The light of Divine Truth—if permitted to have its course free—will dissipate the mists of superstition and ignorance, that shroud so many in darkness all their lives No one can become a good intelligent citizen, much less a true Christian, without a knowledge of the Scriptures.

"The Trustees are well aware, that in an Institution of this kind, if piety and morality are not inculcated, corruption of principle and practice will ensue. They design, therefore, that the *moral improvement* of the pupils shall be made an object of special attention, in the institution that they have established: and they wish to admit no one to its privileges who cannot furnish satisfactory certificates of his good moral character. The increased patronage which they are now receiving from an enlightened portion of the public, confirms their confidence in the principles they have adopted, and encourages them in the belief that their efforts to elevate the standard of education, in this vicinity, will be more effectual on the rising generation, and more fully appreciated by all classes of the community.

"They are confident in expressing the opinion, that any young person, of good morals and industrious habits, who is desirous of obtaining a thorough education, will find this Academy a pleasant and profitable place for study.

"The building is a large and convenient brick edifice,

erected in one of the most delightful spots that can be found in the County of Lebanon. A daily mail is received both from Philadelphia and Harrisburg, and two stages pass the place every day.

"Gentlemen who contemplate sending their children away from home to school are invited to visit this Institution and satisfy themselves by observation of the advantages it affords."

When Mr. Chapman took charge of the Academy, 65 years ago, there were but few English speaking families in town; and, in the rural portion of the community, Pennsylvania German was spoken almost exclusively. Owing to this, one of the most difficult tasks confronting school children was the acquiring of a correct and distinct articulation of the English language. Mr. Chapman met this difficulty with a plan that produced good results. He grouped together words having similar elementary sounds unfamiliar to us, and hence more or less difficult to articulate, wrote them in the form of a booklet, and had us each make a copy of it. Then being arranged in classes, we were drilled at stated times, first pronouncing the words in unison, and then singly. This aroused a spirit of emulation and a resolve to master these phonetic difficulties; and some of the more ambitious students made roll calls of the troublesome words while at home or on the way to school. Some of these old time students no doubt remember how chagrined they felt whenever, in an unguarded moment, there was a slip of the tongue that revealed their old, loose, incorrect habit of pronouncing th in such words as north and south, wh in what, why, &c.; z as in was and is; and other sounds, which under former teachers had been slurred over without correction. It was an irrepairable loss to the community when, in 1846, Mr. Chapman was lured away to accept a professorship in Franklin College, Lancaster. A teacher so loveable, sunny-tempered, capable, and conscientious in the discharge of his duties, as Mr. Chapman, naturally continued to hold a warm place in the hearts of his pupils, after being called to other fields of labor; and the

feeling still endures and will continue to the end of their days. Therefore, as a further tribute of respect, we feel justified in extending this paper, to include a short sketch of his busy after life.

Having, in 1845, been ordained an evangelist, he frequently preached for different denominations during the following seven years of his career as teacher. He then settled down as pastor of a Congregational church in the west, and after thirteen years in the Gospel ministry and one year as professor of languages in a female College, he came back to New Hampshire and devoted thirteen years more to the ministry in his native State. Being then seventy years of age, he retired and settled in Exeter for the balance of his life, where for the next fifteen years he was engaged the greater part of the time in writing family histories, tracing back the genealogy of his own family two hundred and fifty years.

Like those wonderful people of the East—the Japanese—he cherished the memory of his ancestors almost to the point of reverance, and took a keen interest in rescuing from oblivion their names and deeds. He was indeed a pioneer in this field of labor, and started a wave of genealogical research that has since spread over the whole country, and today there are thousands engaged upon the same laudable work.

In the language of Mr. Chapman: "Too many float with the current and care little about whence they came and whither they are going. Still it must be confessed that for what we have and for what we are, we are deeply indebted to others who have gone before us. If we build higher than they it is because they laid the foundation for us. If we deny our obligations to them we exhibit our ingratitude and our folly * * * Our eyes must be dim and our ears dull if we perceive nothing profitable in the wisdom and the virtures and even the follies of those who have gone before us."

The genealogical writings of Mr. Chapman consist of five volumes, as follows: "The Chapman Genealogy," 140 pp. 8vo; "Genealogy of the Folsom Family," 296 pp. 8vo;

"The Philbrick and Philbrook Genealogy," 202 pp. 8vo. Leonard Weeks and Decendants," 204 pp. 8vo; and Vol. I, Lane Genealogies, 296 pp. 8vo.

These works are models of arrangement and compactness and, as the years roll on, will be treasured more and more by those who find therein a record of their ancestry.

Mr. Chapman was born in 1810; was always of a delicate constitution, his head looking out of proportion to his slender body, but lived so wisely—was habitually so moderate in dieting and judicious in bodily exercise—that he passed the third mile-stone in the Twentieth Century, and retained his mental faculties unimpaired to the last. While in Myerstown he was in the habit of sawing and splitting his daily supply of firewood, which he considered healthful exercise; and it was stated in the highly eulogistic obituary articles in the Exeter papers, on his demise, that he kept up this practice to within a short time of the close of his life. He was over ninety-three years of age when he peacefully passed the portals of death, respected and loved by all who knew him, and leaving behind an imposing monument of industry and good works. What a life to emulate!

J. G. Merchant was the next principal. His management of the school left no impressions upon your scribe worth recording. Whether this was owing to antiquated methods of teaching, or to the excitement caused by the Mexican war then in progress and in which American youths were so intensely interested, it is hard to tell. He remained only a year, when A. M. Middlemess, an Englishman, was appointed in his place, and who held the position for three years.

Mr Middlemess was an expert in Mathematics. The celerity with which he worked out our problems for us was a standing wonder; but it was like leading a child by the hand instead of teaching it to walk unsupported. It was not to his credit, either, that he required no blackboard demonstrations; and the habit of his students in Arithmetic of making manuscript copies of their slate-work, with a great pen

flourish for the headings, was next thing to a waste of time. Some of the students evidently took a livelier interest in the rosy cheeks and merry brown eyes of the teacher's daughter, Maggie, than in the long drawn, old fashioned parsing of Smith's Grammar, or the parrot like conjugation of the verb love through its different moods and tenses. But his pupils liked him for his amiable disposition, his only fault being that his methods of teaching were not up to date.

In the Spring of 1850 Mr. Middleness exchanged the school-room for strawberry culture in the vicinity of Pittsburg, Pa.; and subsequent reports told how his horticultural venture proved a success, and that he found his new employment more congenial and renumerative than teaching.

Then came Henry C. Cline, a recent graduate of Pennsylvania College, a tall, straight, black-haired, brown-eyed, dignified gentleman, of a somewhat imperious disposition. He started with a full school, but in the course of the first year a rebellion sprang up among his students, with all the evil effects that usually follow in the wake of such a disturbance. Neither side would yield, and the attendance of the school dwindled down to a baker's dozen, of which the writer happily was one, and he was repaid a thousand-fold for standing by his teacher.

Mr. Cline was really an able instructor, well up in modern methods, and took pride in his profession. But his school had become too small to give him a respectable living, and at the end of eighteen months he left Myerstown for New Orleans, where he became principal of a select school at a high salary, with leisure enough to study law. He married a Creole lady of wealth, was in due course of time admitted to the bar, and speedily built up a lucrative business in his new profession.

Mr. Cline's delivery was as flowing and clear-cut as his hand-writing, which was remarkable for its regularity and neatness. His letters were usually written on large sheets of paper, first along the ruled lines, and then crosswise, without materially impairing their legibility.

How he, a Northerner, fared during the Civil War, is not known. As he was never heard from afterwards, the inference is that he did not survive it.

Peter B Witmer

When Mr. Cline left Myerstown, the Academy was rented by Peter B. Witmer, A. M., the first principal who was a native of our County. The practice of hiring principals had been abandoned, and the custom now was for the Board of

Trustees to lease the building to the applicant that they considered best qualified.

From a pecuniary point of view Mr. Witmer made a more decided success of the school than any preceding principal. In bearing he was the opposite of his predecessor, who had been regarded as feeling himself above the majority of his fellow mortals. Mr. Witmer's friendliness was catching, and took especially well among the country people. He greeted them in Penna. German, which put them at ease at once, and then he conversed with them in the vernacular by the hour. Mr. Witmer attached great importance to the study of Latin and Greek as a mental discipline and a means of cultivating the English language; and though a fair classical scholar himself, he usually had an assistant who was a graduate of some College or University.

In his methods of teaching Mr. Witmer was regarded by some as sticking rather too closely to the text. In school government he lowered his dignity to some extent by adhering (though in a moderate degree) to that relic of barbarism the rod in the school-room, which was something unusual for the Senior Department. He was apparently a believer in the old adage—"Spare the rod and spoil the child." He evidently considered a rule, good enough for the wise King of Israel as good enough for him, without making allowance for altered circumstances. No doubt frequent spanking was necessary with the promiscuous crowd of youngsters that enlivened the populous harem of King Solomon. But, in our present day schools, the rule of love has been substituted for that of force, the rod is relegated to the past, and many people believe, with Elbert Hubbard, that Solomon's Proverb should read: Spare the rod and *save* the child. It is not out of place to recall a few instances when the switch figured in Mr. Witmer's school. On one occasion it was used on a classmate of the writer's while conjugating a Greek verb. The young, budding theologian, who afterwards blossomed into a minister of one of our prominent denominations, took the chastisement without the twitch of a muscle. The cloud

of dust it raised showed, that, however painful and humiliating it was to the suffering student, it served a good purpose for the coat by giving it a needed dusting, and this dust cloud gave a touch of humor to the affair that acted as a balm to the outraged sympathy of his classmate.

On another occasion the students indulged in the time-honored privilege of locking out the teacher on the last day of school, preceding Christmas. Mr. Witmer, instead of taking it good humoredly, armed himself with a formidable looking bunch of shoots from an apple tree in the yard, and, after vainly trying to force a window, scared one of the more timid scholars into unlocking the entrance door. As he stalked up the aisle to his desk, his threatening look betokened a fearful trouncing for the guilty party, if found. In an icy tone he demanded to know who had locked him out. The high tension of feeling in the school-room was instantly relaxed and followed by a ripple of amusement, when the calm, clear voice of Miss Annie Bockius, a quiet, studious young lady, and deservedly a favorite of the teacher's, announced: "It was I, Mr. Witmer." The irate teacher felt the awkwardness of the situation and backed down as gracefully as circumstances permitted.

These unfavorable reminiscences may seem uncalled for by old friends of Mr. Witmer, but they are history and the writer is free to confess that his own early record as a teacher in the public schools, is not entirely free from a similar abuse of authority, and he has never ceased to regret it.

As Mr. Witmer served the community satisfactorily for a longer term of years than any other principal of the Academy, it is gratifying to be able to have this paper illustrated with his picture, his son, Charles K. Witmer, Esq., having kindly consented to give the loan of the wood cut. On leaving Myerstown Mr. Witmer built an Academy of his own in Palmyra, and maintained a prosperous school for a number of years thereafter.

Next, in the Spring of 1857, came Sylvanus Shimer,

Esq. The writer knows so little about Mr. Shimer's school, or his qualifications as a teacher, that he does not feel free to either commend or criticise it. He remembers, however, a popular entertainment given by his school, the program consisting of a three-act play, entitled "Sic Transit," and written for the occasion by the principal. It was printed by Wm. Breslin, of Lebanon, who, in the name of the author, gave it the following modest introduction: "The author of this Drama is Sylvanus Shimer, Esq., who has instructed us to say that it was designed only for the use of his school at Myerstown, and in no other respect would he wish to be understood by the community in which he lives, or by the public generally. He has endeavored to fit it to the capacity of his school, and proposes to have it performed at one exhibition of the same as soon as time and circumstances will allow."

The scene of the play was laid in New York City. Mr. Shimer had exhausted all the available material of his school in assigning the minor parts of his play, and had to look outside for some one to represent the leading character—Mayor Wood. His choice fell upon your humble servant, who was then teaching public school. This transformation of a recent plow-boy into the leading actor on whom the success of the play so largely depended, was a rather risky step. The play, however, was received very favorably and was given three nights in succession to full houses.

The success of "Sic Transit" on the stage was largely due to its happy blending of tragedy and comedy. Dutch Peter was represented to perfection by another outsider, the eccentric town druggist—Adam Gettle; and "Brudder Bones," of the colored minstrel troupe, personated by Reuben Spangler, a student from a farm three or four miles southwest of town, was also performed in a style worthy of Christy's Opera House.

The plain muslin stage curtain was replaced by a canvas representing a New York Broadway-street scene, painted by Mr. Reuben Reinhold, a local artist, and made a fine appearance.

The play possessed sufficient literary merit to give Mr. Shimer a local reputation as a writer of drama; but on subsequently applying his spare time in editing *The Humane*, a weekly paper published by Druggist Getfle, the high-flown language of his long-winded editorials, and the curious lack of connection in his ideas, caused much surprise, and lost him his literary prestige. He certainly had talent as a writer of drama, but it is presumed his school duties left him too little time for good editorial work. It was supposed that all the copies of "Sic Transit" had, in the course of years, been lost or destroyed. But, when Mr. Henry Schell prepared to move to Philadelphia, some six years ago, he discovered a copy among his papers, and presented it to your scribe. It has now reached an age that gives it value as a memento of the past, which entitles it to preservation in connection with this paper, and it is herewith presented to your Society.

Mr. Shimer left in July, 1859, when J. H. Bassler, and John Myers, son of Founder Daniel Myers, were offered the lease of the Academy which they accepted. They at once installed themselves as joint Principals, to their mutual satisfaction, and, it is hoped, also, to the lasting benefit of the boys and girls, young men and young women, who attended their school in such numbers.

Both Bassler and Myers had been students at the Millersville Normal School long enough to become grounded in the normal methods of teaching which they introduced into the Academy.

The seating capacity of the school was so largely overtaxed that an overflow school of the less advanced pupils, with Isaac Myers, brother of John, in charge, was established in the lower room, which room, for a number of years before, had been used only for Sunday school and church purposes.

It was during the principalship of Bassler and Myers that our dreadful civil war burst upon the country, and the young men of the Academy promptly raised over the cupola a national flag of generous proportions. Its beautiful folds were turned to the breeze on a lovely evening amid patriotic

speeches; and more than one of the participants returned home that night with the premonition that Father Abraham might eventually need him, too, before the rebellion was crushed.

In the spring of 1862 Mr. Myers severed his connection with the Academy to follow his parents to the State of Illinois. An additional, and probably a stronger motive furnished, being the previous removal to the same State of Mr. Levi Hertzler and family, including his daughter, Miss Lydia, the estimable and accomplished young lady whom Mr. Myers afterwards married.

Bassler was now sole principal, with Hiram P. Seibert as assistant. The school was well filled and the relation between teacher and students was all that could be desired. The only disturbing element was the fierce conflict of arms in the South, which was apparently increasing in magnitude and horror as the summer advanced. Ere long the ominous news came over the wires that the magnificent army of General McClellan, on which such great hopes had been centered, was sadly decimated in a seven days' series of fierce battles, and was now on the defensive in a fortified position on the James River, awaiting reenforcements.

Thus our eyes were at last opened to the real magnitude of the task of crushing the rebellion, and thenceforth the magic folds of "Old Glory," swaying to and fro over the cupola of the Academy, seemed to greet us with the message that the life of the nation was trembling in the balance, and beckoning to the rescue. Anon, the North wind would stretch it straight southward, pointing like a finger to the pathway of duty.

Then followed the call for 600,000 fresh troops which fired some of the students with an enthusiasm that knew no bounds, and which soon crystalized into a preamble and resolutions pledging themselves to enlistment in defence of their imperilled country. A street meeting was held by them to organize a company, but only those who had made speeches—Academy students—signed the company roll that first night,

the impression evidently being that the movement lacked a responsible leader.

Next day, Saturday, Isaac B. Noecker, one of the leading spirits among these patriotic students, happened to meet his teacher on the street, and made such an eloquent appeal to him to head their company, and thus, as he said, insure its success, that a reluctant consent was given.

With characteristic promptness Mr. Noecker at once had posters printed announcing a meeting for that evening, and engaged a drum corps to parade the streets, and, with their martial music, arouse the people. That night the company roll was increased to twenty-four.

The following Monday, after announcing to his school a vacation until another teacher was procured, the retiring principal hastened to Harrisburg and secured authority from Major Roy Stone, subsequently a Brigadier General, to raise a company for a Regiment of the Bucktail Brigade he was then organizing, with permission to board the recruits at Government expense in the hotels of town until the company was ready to proceed to Camp Curtin. At the meeting next night, Tuesday, the company roll was swelled up to forty-eight, and in eight days it was filled in excess of the maximum allowed by Army Regulations. The very flower of the young manhood of Myerstown and surrounding communities filled its ranks.

This movement is thus particularized because the honor of initiating it, and much of the credit for its eventual success belong to students of the Academy. That strenuous young patriot, Mr. Noecker, who was so active in organizing the company, was a brother-in-law of Adam Bahney, a Director of the Myerstown Bank. In keeping with his romantic nature, he married his sweetheart, Miss Annie Cupp, in Camp Curtin, when the regiment was on the eve of departure for Washington. Though far from having a robust constitution, and contrary to frequent predictions that he would soon land in a hospital, he stood the service like a seasoned veteran.

He was promoted to Sergeant and died June 12th, 1864, from a wound received in the Wilderness, while engaged, together with several comrades, in a desperate effort to capture a Confederate flag.

Another of the students—H. H. Spayd—at present Supt. of the public schools of Minersville, Pa., was, after the mortal wounding of Color Bearer Brehm, promoted to the conspicuous and doubly dangerous position of Color Sergeant of his regiment—the 149th P. V.

Comrade Spayd seemed to wear a charmed life; for, with the exception of a serious wound received at Gettysburg, while color guard, he bore aloft Old Glory on many a hotly contested field of battle without receiving a scratch, though in one engagement the strap of his haversack was shot off.

I take the liberty of making the following extract from a letter received from Prof. Spayd: "For years I have felt that the Academies had done a grand work in Pennsylvania. I know the Myerstown Academy did a great deal of good. From my earliest recollections I remember hearing people—young men—talk of having attended the Academy and what a grand institution it was, and the wonderful things they had learned there. Hearing these favorable reports naturally gave me a desire to enter the Academy some day when I was old enough and had learned what the district schools could give in those days. At last the day came when I was permitted to enter the sacred precincts and drink at the Pierian Fountain deep draughts of inspiration if not of learning in the ordinary accepted term. I believe the Myerstown Academy gave inspiration to many a young man, and inspiration—a desire to know—is far better than a mere aimless delving in the text books of a school, for it leads to a *healthy* acquisition.

"I remember that I was inspired by the books in the bookcase. There were volumes in French. I can still see Balzac, and I also see the case on the right as I faced the

teacher's desk, filled with philosophical apparatus. All these things gave me a desire to know and to understand what was in the books and what the apparatus could mean.

"The spacious ground around the Academy and its beautiful situation also impressed me deeply and I have often wondered since why the people do not take more pride with their school houses throughout the country districts.

"I believe the Academy did more good in its way of teaching than many a school of greater pretentions of today with its rigid classification and strict curriculm. In the Academy you could take that which appealed to you and that which you felt you needed regardless of what others would study.

"Here I was first led into the mysteries of English Grammar and later into the subject that looks to the uninitiated like Egyptian Hieroglyphics—Algebra; and possibly I got some of the inspiration of patriotism by the singing of The Star Spangled Banner, that led me to place my name on a paper 'for three years or the war.'

"I can readily recall a time when nearly every teacher in the public schools of Jackson township, as well as the teachers of some of the neighboring townships, were educated in the Myerstown Academy."

Further casualties among Academy students—members of Company "C," 149th P. V.—were Wm. H. Reigart, wounded at Gettysburg, and since the war, Postmaster of Myerstown for a term; Lorenzo Blecker, wounded at North Anna River, Pa., and Aaron W. Sattazahn, killed at Gettysburg.

The vacancy caused by the sudden closing of the school on August 8th, 1862, was filled, the following September, by Rev. Samuel Francis, of Chester county, who remained until the spring of 1863, when John Myers came back from the

PROF. JOHN MYERS

West, settled in town with his young wife, and resumed charge of the Academy, which he conducted with signal ability until the spring of 1865, when he was induced by relatives of Shelby, Ohio, to move thence and take charge of their High school. He was subsequently elected Borough Superintendent, which office he held until sickness compelled him to resign.

Calvin Gerhard, a graduate of Franklin and Marshall College, succeeded Mr. Myers as principal of the Academy and taught one year, when he entered the Reformed Theological Seminary at Lancaster, and his assistant, Samuel P.

Hemperly, became principal which position he held until the Academy was merged into the newly chartered Palatinate College, in the spring of 1867, he being then elected a member of the Faculty. He was given the chair of Mathematics which he held until the College passed into the hands of the United Evangelical Denomination, in 1894, and was re-christened Albright College. The Professor met with sudden death by a fall while trimming the vines that ornamented his handsome residence

After the removal of Palatinate College under President Nix to the new building, the old Academy was sold to members of the New Lutheran Denomination for a house of worship. But their effort to establish a self-supporting congregation not meeting with success, they sold the property for factory purposes, and it has since passed through several hands, including Burkholder and Son, and J. J. Swauger, and was greatly enlarged by the latter, and is now owned by Liebowitz & Sons, of New York City.

In the frontispiece is given as much of a west side view of the old familiar building as the trees and new additions permit. The old basement windows are mostly walled up, and those remaining have been reduced in size to a few panes of glass.

Adieu old walls! Many are the sweet memories associated with you and the bright youths you sheltered in days agone. Me thinks I can see them once again busily unravelling the intricacies of English Grammar, or grappling with the difficulties of mathematical problems, or revelling amidst the wonders of the Natural Sciences, or delving in the beauties of the Greek and Latin classics. Often you—old walls—resounded with the eloquence of aspiring young orators, giving their weekly declamations. Many the times you must have detected admiring glances from lad to lassie. Building air-castles, were they? Possibly so but also drawing in fresh inspiration and increased determination to master difficulties and stand forth the peer of any of their classmates! Once again, old structure, a sweetly sad farewell!

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